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ABSTRACT

Burnout is a condition that exacts a heavy toll on individual and organizational effectiveness. In this paper stress and burnout are defined and their relationship to each other is identified. A model for stress is developed so that intervention strategies can be based on practical and conceptual grounds. Burnout in human service organizations is also identified, and six conditions that contribute to burnout in organizations are explored: lack of funds, lack of flexibility, lack of decision making powers for middle managers, task overload, little recognition for efforts, and nature of client population. One strategy for preventing burnout is the instituting of a social-professional support group which provides opportunities for organizational and individual assessment, a method to reduce conflict, feedback and rewards, timeouts for individuals, and screening procedures for new counselors. (Author)

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Burnout in Counselors and Organizations

by

John C. Moracco

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Dr. Moracco was raised and educated through the B.S. degree in upstate New York, and later taught in the Rochester City School System for eight years. Through an NDEA Fellowship he then completed his M.A. degree at Arizona State University, after which he entered the doctoral program at the University of Iowa. He was a counselor at the University's laboratory school for two years during that time. After completing the degree, he accepted a university position in Counselor Education at the American University of Beirut where he spent five years before returning to teach at the University of Iowa. Currently, he is an associate professor in Counselor Education at Auburn University in Alabama.

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BURNOUT IN COUNSELORS AND ORGANIZATIONS

John C. Moracco

Burnout is a condition that exacts a heavy toll on individual and organizational effectiveness. In this paper stress and burnout are defined and their relationship with each other is identified. A model for stress is developed so that intervention strategies can be based on practical and conceptual grounds. Burnout in human service organizations is also identified. Six conditions that contribute to burnout in organizations are explored. They are: (1) lack of funds, (2) lack of flexibility, (3) lack of decision making powers for middle managers, (4) task overload, (5) little recognition for efforts, and (6) nature of client population. Strategies for preventing burnout include instituting a social-professional support group. This group provides opportunities for organizational and individual assessment, a method to reduce conflict, feedback and rewards, timeouts for individuals, and screening procedures for new counselors.

Stress and burnout are recently noted phenomena in the helping professions (Moracco, 1980). The literature reports that they occur in crisis therapists, physicians, and mental health workers (Freudenberger, 1975; Wubbolding & Kessler-Bolotin, 1979), counselors (Kremer & Owen, 1979; Moracco, 1978; Valle, 1979; Van Auken, 1979; Vestermark & Johnson, 1970), day care workers (Maslach, 1976), teachers (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978), and graduate students (Tiedeman, 1979; Warnath, 1979; Warnath & Shelton, 1976). Most of the literature is devoted to describing the development of stress and burnout in people working in the helping professions, including the behavioral manifestations associated with the phenomena. However, these descriptions are not broadly based on research findings and in some cases may border on speculation (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978). Clearly, what is needed is research that will give us a better grasp of the occupational hazards of stress and burnout.

Before any meaningful research can be conducted, an accepted definition of terms must be made. One purpose of this paper is to define counselor stress and burnout in individuals and organizations. Another is to suggest a model of counselor stress that can serve as a basis for future research. Further, procedures are suggested that may assuage stress and burnout in

counselors who may be caught in its throes or may be employed in an organization that is burned out.

Defining Counselor Stress and Burnout

One problem associated with defining stress is the apparent confusion about its meaning and usage. Synonyms abound in sociology, psychology, and other fields of behavioral sciences. Work stress, occupational tension, industrial stress, job tension, and organizational stress are part of the nomenclature that adds to the confusion (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978).

Definitions of stress seem to divide themselves into two groups. The first views stress as environmental factors which impact on individuals. An example of this is the amount of paperwork that some counselors are required to complete. The second defines stress as a physiological response behavior of an individual. According to this approach some researchers claim that the behavior pattern consists of nonspecific responses made to stressors acting on the individual. Selye's (1974, 1975, 1976) works can be subsumed under this definition. Another group of researchers subscribing to this view maintains that there is an evaluation element in the stress paradigm, i.e., that individuals experience stress when they appraise themselves as having inadequate coping strengths to meet a particular demand. Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978) have labeled this the transactional approach.

The transactional approach will probably appeal to most counselors because it takes into account both environmental and individual influences. While this view of stress has much surface appeal, it compounds considerably the understanding of its dynamic. For example, it implies that reactions to a given stressor are peculiar to the individual. The result is that two people may react quite differently to the same stressor. Further, when two people appraise an event as stressful, regardless of the stressor, they may respond differently. It appears that we respond to stress consistently at the intra-individual level only (Kremer & Owen, 1979).

In this article stress will be limited to those reactions that have an adverse effect on individuals. It should be noted that not all writers on this topic would agree to this. Selye (1975), a pioneer in the psychology of stress, posits the concepts that stress is with us at all times and that stress can be beneficial as well. However, for our purposes, counselor stress is defined as an adverse response that is often associated with pathogenic

physiological and biochemical changes as a consequence of aspects of the counselor's work, and mediated by the appraisal that demands made upon the counselor present a threat to his/her self-worth and that current coping mechanisms are inadequate to diminish the perceived threat. This definition is adapted from the work of Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978) on teacher stress, and it lends itself easily to a counselor stress model.

The definition of counselor stress has at least four important features. (1) Stress responses are adverse reactions. (2) Stress responses may be associated with physical and chemical changes in individuals. (3) The response is mediated by the perceived discrepancy between coping ability and threat. (4) There is a perceived loss of self-esteem. These elements of the definition provide fertile ground for research.

Physiological and biochemical changes mentioned in the definition refer to results of research on stress. The stress mechanism is usually the body's mobilization effort to ward off danger or threat. The body gears itself up by a series of actions that deliver hormones into the bloodstream to increase respiration and heart rates. Hormones also decrease visceral activity (such as digestion) in an attempt to concentrate the body's resources on the threat. If the individual's coping mechanisms are sufficient to deal with the threat successfully, the body's mobilization effort quickly dissipates and the various systems return to normal rates and functioning. If, however, the individual does not have adequate coping mechanisms and the perceived threat remains, the body's mobilization effort continues at its high rate. This may have significant physiological effects on the individual. Colitis, ulcers, headaches, and backaches are some examples of stress-related illnesses (Kremer & Owen, 1979).

Counselor Stress and Burnout

Counselor stress and burnout are terms often used interchangeably. In addition to the confusion about the term stress, there is no accepted definition of burnout. Moracco (1978) defines burnout as an inadequate coping mechanism used consistently by an individual to reduce stress. Subsumed under burnout are such mechanisms as drug use (abuse), withdrawal, sarcasm, loss of humor, and a sense of paranoia. Often burned out individuals adopt a sort of tunnel vision and a set of rigid attitudes that prevent the development of any creative adaptation to stressors. A cycle is set whereby the

burned out individual is less able to cope with stress which in turn increases the frequency of stressful situations.

Conceptualized in this way, counselor burnout is thought of as a collective term for a set of ineffective coping mechanisms to deal with stress. A person who has become burned out has serious physical, psychological, and/or behavioral consequences as a result. It should be remembered that under this definition burnout can only be applied to an individual if that individual consistently engages in ineffective coping mechanisms to meet stressful situations and these coping mechanisms have a deleterious effect on the counselor's functioning. Thus, a counselor who is an alcoholic may be defined as burned out if he/she consistently uses alcohol to reduce stress.

A Model of Counselor Stress

The model of counselor stress used in this paper is patterned after Kyriacou and Sutcliffe's model of teacher stress (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978). This model serves as a basis for a counselor stress model because it incorporates the concept of appraisal in the stress paradigm.

Figure 1 displays the various components of the model. Box 1 in the model contains the potential stressors in the counselor's work environment. However, the individual's own appraisal (Box 2) is a mediator in this process and one person's stress may not be another's. This is an important aspect of the stress model presented here. While the appraisal feature makes this model of stress appear more complicated than other models, it does offer an additional place for stress reduction. For example, if it is assumed that appraisal plays an important role in stress, then modification of the appraisal process makes sense. Additionally, the appraisal stage offers counselors an opportunity to take an active role in reducing stress in their lives.

Since the definition used in this paper emphasizes stress as a perceived threat to self-esteem, in order to be stressful a situation must incorporate the elements of harm or loss, threat, or challenge, and must be perceived to be beyond an individual's competency (Kremer & Owen, 1979). According to these authors situations common to counselors which may generate stress from harm or loss are: being fired, losing a loved one, and losing one's status quo. Among situations which generate stress from threat are: financial concerns; conflict between counselor's and supervisor's expectancies for client change; few instances of positive rewards from authority figures;

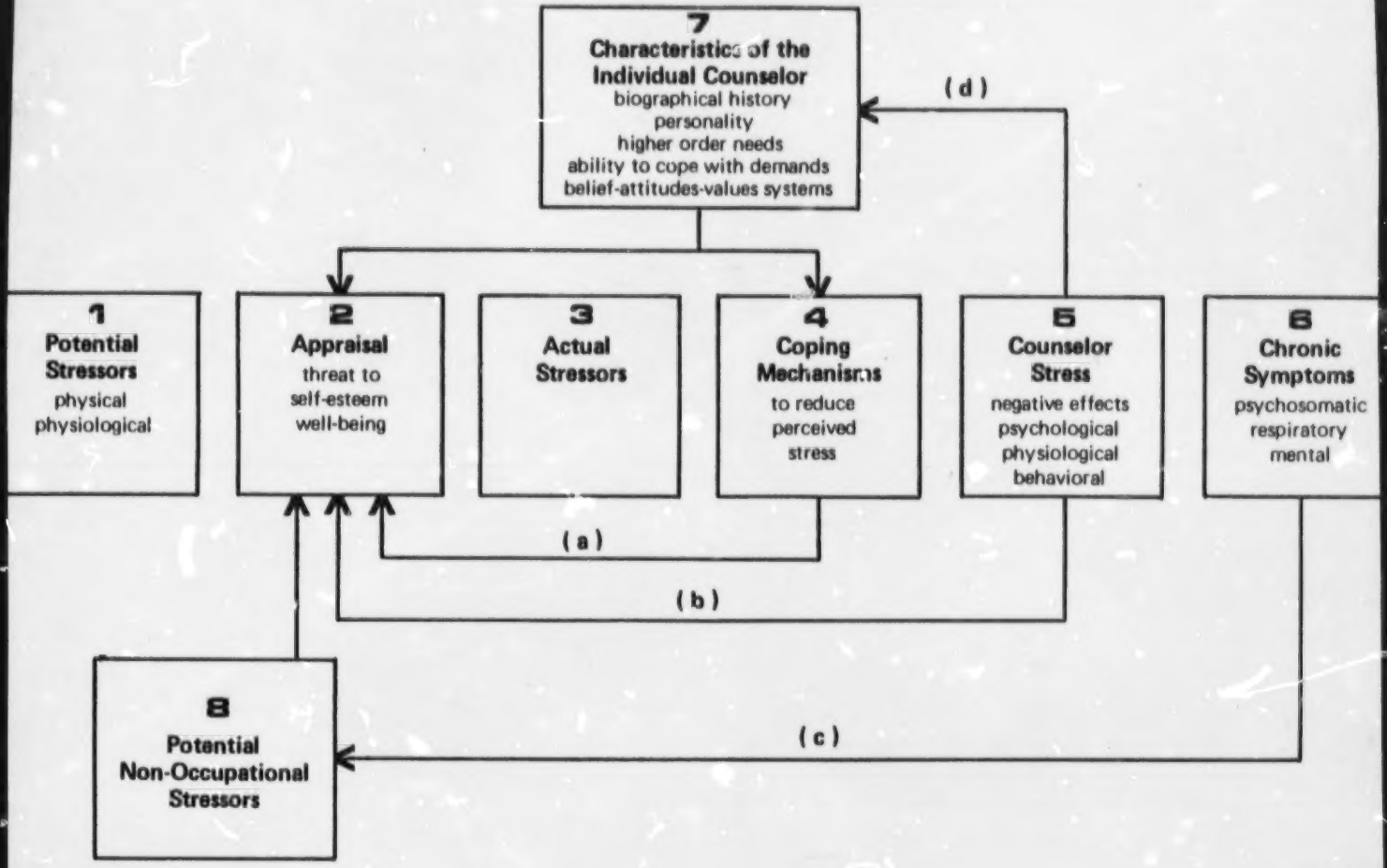

Figure I. A Model of Counselor Stress *

* Adapted from a model of teacher stress developed by C. Kyriacou and J. Sutcliffe printed in *Educational Studies*, March 1978, 4(1), 1-6. Reprinted by permission of Carfax Publishing Company, Oxford, England.

and doubt revolving around moral, intellectual, and spiritual concerns. Among situations which generate stress from challenges are: publishing; carrying a heavy caseload; establishing a guidance program; working with difficult clients; and jockeying among parents, teachers, and students. Remember, counselor stress only occurs when the individual views a potential stressor as a threat to self-esteem or well-being. This can happen in two ways: (a) a counselor may evaluate his/her coping mechanism as inadequate to meet demands placed upon him or her, or (b) a counselor is faced with demands that place him/her in conflict with higher order needs (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978).

The appraisal process that the counselor employs is the result of the interaction between counselor characteristics (Box 7) and the counselor's perception of the demands placed upon him/her. Individual characteristics include such attributes as age, sex, and counseling experience (biographic details); degree of flexibility, and anxiety state (personality traits); need for understanding (higher order need); and skills and counselor beliefs (belief-attitude-values system). The counselor's sense of competency or degree of control that he/she feels is at his/her disposal is an important factor in the appraisal process.

It should be noted that not all potential stress factors are related to the counselor's job. Box 8 contains those potential stressors that take place outside of the work place. A death in the family, divorce, and illness are examples that would be included in this area. These can be additional sources of stress for the counselor and may affect his/her ability to meet job demands.

After a potential stressor is perceived as threatening, it becomes an actual stressor (Box 3) and the counselor employs a coping skill (Box 4) to deal with it. In this model the degree of stress experienced by the counselor is directly related to how threatening the counselor perceives the stressor to be.

Counselor stress responses are indicated in Box 5. The definition of counselor stress emphasized the negative aspects of stress. These negative effects may be manifested psychologically as in depression, anger, low morale, or hostility; physiologically as in stomach upsets or high blood pressure; or behaviorally as in alcoholism, absenteeism, or withdrawal. Of course a counselor may manifest these symptoms in any combination.

Because stress is accompanied by physiological and biochemical changes in an individual, there is real danger that over time psychosomatic illness may occur (e.g., asthma, peptic ulcers, or spastic colitis). Also, chronic stress may lead to coronary heart disease, cancer, or mental ill health. These aspects are indicated in Box 6 and are related to burnout.

Four feedback loops are indicated on the model (a,b,c, and d); these represent interactions between the boxes. For example, feedback loop (a) indicates that the coping mechanisms used may affect the counselor's appraisal of potential stressors. If a counselor has an especially forceful coping mechanism, it may diminish the stress emanating from the threat. However, this may not always be healthy, e.g., the counselor who employs excessive denial behavior.

The second feedback loop (b) can also affect appraisal. Counselors who are extremely dissatisfied with their jobs usually compromise their ability to handle stress effectively. Thus they are apt to perceive more events as stressful. Feedback loop (c) acts in much the same way as (b) but may impact more strongly because of the chronic nature of the symptoms.

Finally, feedback loop (d) represents the effects of previous ways of handling stress. If a counselor has not been too successful in handling stress in the past, this will probably affect his/her perceptions of the danger of threat or loss of well-being.

Manifestations of Stress and Burnout in Counselors

Behaviors exhibited by counselors in stress are grouped in Kyriacou & Sutcliffe's (1978) system.

> The manifestation of stress identified may be physical (peptic ulcers, cardiovascular diseases), psychological (depression, anxiety) or behavioral (deterioration in work performance, deterioration in interpersonal relationships). (p. 303)

However, these authors note that sources of stress and manifestations of stress are sometimes difficult to separate. Poor relationships among colleagues as the result of task overload, for example, can be classified as a manifestation of stress or as a source of stress in itself. Or, a divorce may occur partly because of counselor stress or, again, may be a source of stress for the counselor as she/he tries to carry out work tasks.

Maslach (1976), Maslach and Pines (1977), and Freudenberger (1975, 1977) discuss a syndrome that can be used to characterize the counselor in stress

which combines symptoms grouped by physical, psychological, and behavioral classifications. Such an individual is easily fatigued, bored with work, and quick to anger. A bit of paranoia may creep into the counselor's thinking. The individual exhibits a strong feeling of resignation and an attitude of futility. In an effort to contain their emotional stress, counselors in stress may attempt to separate the home, social, and professional parts of their lives. While at work they seldom talk about their families or their social activities. While at home there appears to be an unwritten agreement not to discuss work-related topics.

Another ineffective coping technique is operating when counselors describe and assess clients or situations by utilizing the jargon of the profession in a clinical but depersonalized manner. Thus the counselor will describe and analyze a client's annoying behavior in detail, failing to realize that he/she has avoided dealing personally with the client exhibiting these behaviors.

A real danger of burned out counselors is that they may fail to assess appropriately their ability to solve clients' problems and concerns. Because they sometimes feel that everyone is out to get them, they often develop the attitude that they alone must solve every problem. These counselors think that they can handle all situations because their ability to trust others has been severely compromised. The caution here is that the counselor in stress may begin to take too many risks with clients.

Other behaviors exhibited by counselors in stress that have powerful implications relate to a loss of concern for clients (Freudenberger, 1975; Maslach, 1976; Maslach & Pines, 1977). In an effort to put distance between the client and him/herself, the burned out counselor tries to cope with stress by cynicism, hostility, and noncaring behavior. This detached concern is seen in other professions as well. Physicians speak of "my patients" instead of individual names, and diseases instead of people ("the coronary case"). Lawyers speak of caseloads as being overbearing instead of the individuals they represent. In extreme cases of burnout, the counselor begins to think of his/her clients in demeaning and sometimes derogatory terms. Frequently, a completely dehumanizing attitude is developed toward clients which mitigates against any possible empathic responding on the part of the counselor. Expressions such as, "You leave your door open and they come rushing in," or, "They come out of the woodwork," or, "They deserve everything they get," become more

frequent in the repertoire of the burned out counselor. Again, coping techniques of distancing are ineffective.

Distancing, both physical and emotional, which disparages clients is perhaps the most common characteristic exhibited by counselors in stress. In the physical dimension of distancing less time is spent with clients, more activity is devoted to paperwork and other related matters. Eye contact and other behaviors characteristic of good attending skills decrease dramatically. Psychologically, the counselor may begin to withdraw in relationships with colleagues. The ultimate distancing technique, resigning one's position with the agency or institution, is the most drastic and least effective for the counselor.

Yet another characteristic of the counselor in stress is a noticeable increase in rigidity and more instances of inflexibility in approaches used to cope with stress. The counselor begins to take on the characteristics of the authoritarian personality as described by Adorno and his associates (1950). He/she begins to treat clients "by the book," and explanations take on a "That's the way we do it around here" attitude. What has been set into motion is a dynamic whereby the more desperately the counselor tries to cope with stress the less efficient he/she becomes. In some cases, the person may turn to drugs, alcohol, or other equally ineffective coping mechanisms. Illnesses, real or imagined, begin to occur more frequently and when contracted are more difficult to shake. A deep tiredness begins to set in regardless of the amount of sleep the person gets. At this stage the counselor is well on the way to becoming burned out.

Strategies for Managing Stress

Stress can exact a horrendous psychological and physical toll on an individual. Furthermore, it can seriously reduce the effectiveness of an agency's work. It is therefore incumbent upon institutions and involved individuals to provide for prevention and care of counselors-in-stress. The following strategies are a few suggestions for the treatment of this phenomenon. Others can be incorporated consistent with what is known about the syndrome. While they are treated separately, it is obvious that there is a significant interaction between these conditions.

System strategies. Perhaps the greatest deterrent to stress in the counseling environment is an effective social-professional support system for counselors. This device allows counselors to receive feedback and rewards, raise concerns about conditions, and discuss feelings and reactions about clients in a safe environment. There appears to be mounting evidence that individuals receiving this kind of support system have lower burnout rates (Maslach & Pines, 1977).

The need to distance oneself from the agency or institution can be an effective device if implemented at the crucial time in the counselor's life. "Timeouts," as Freudenberger (1975) calls them, allow a person the flexibility necessary to be released from work and thus remove the person from the stress situation. This technique has at least two preconditions: One is that the individual be able to assess accurately the need for timeouts; the other is that the support system recognize timeouts as legitimate. It is also incumbent on members of the support system to point out stress behaviors to those individuals displaying them.

Another technique is to rotate job duties of counselors. Changes should occur often enough to break up the routine tasks of counseling. When the support system begins to recognize some ineffective behavior on the part of one of its members, it is a good idea to change that member's functions. This should be done in close collaboration with the counselor involved. Otherwise, one runs the risk of increasing feelings of paranoia on the part of the individual.

When conflicts arise, the support system should work on a consensus resolution model. Explanations of this model are found in Main and Roark (1975), Moracco (1978), and Gordon (1974). Additionally, the support system should seek to implement as many decision-making powers as possible. This may mean negotiating with administrators over sharing authority and decision-making powers.

Individual strategies. Persons can apply some strategies on an individual basis. One such is an accurate assessment by the person of his/her personality style. Questions to ask are, "Am I a race horse or turtle type?" or "What kind of clues is my body sending me at the present time?" Selye (1974) indicates that each of us is the best judge of how we personally react to stress. Stress inventories, such as the one that was developed by Holmes and

Rahe (1967) notwithstanding, are not as valuable as careful self-observation. Being attuned to our body clues can tell us if we are running above or below our particular threshold for tolerating stress. This information should provide us with the necessary permission to intervene with an appropriate coping mechanism.

Jogging, swimming, and other vigorous exercise that does not incorporate competition are generally quite beneficial. These exercises have the potential to dissipate the body's mobilization efforts in response to stress. In this respect the harmful effects of pent-up emotions on the body may be assuaged.

Relaxation exercises are very appropriate for reducing stress. Since the states of relaxation and anxiety are incompatible, a person engaging in deep muscle relaxation can thwart the negative effects of stress. Many commercially-produced relaxation tapes are available. While relaxation exercises are of reported benefit, there is some controversy over whether introspection activities help or acerbate stress. Freudenberger (1975) claims that these kinds of activities, including Transcendental Meditation, yoga, or even encounter groups, are not recommended for the counselor-in-stress. It is probably safe to say that the individual should determine what best reduces stress for him/her and evaluate stress management activities in the light of how beneficial they are personally.

The self-assessment process also has the advantage of providing information as to what behaviors or situations induce stress for a particular individual. Once the individual is aware of what these are, it is necessary to assess his/her current reactions to these stressors and the degree to which current coping techniques are successful in reducing the stress encountered. If there is reasonable doubt that present coping skills are effective, other possibilities should be investigated. At this point the counselor should solicit support, information, and help from the support group. The degree to which individuals can do this may be the best single indicator of their ability to prevent burnout. Other techniques used with the support system, including timeouts and changing routines, can be applied on an individual basis.

Counselors should examine periodically their motivations for counseling. They should examine whether their commitment to the profession is realistic. One should be wary of the overcommitted as they may have false expectations for themselves and their clients. The overcommitted often take over the burden of responsibility from clients. When clients fail to improve, they are apt to

consider it a personal failure or to view clients in less than positive terms. Unrealistically-committed individuals are extremely vulnerable to burnout.

Kremer and Owen (1979) describe a cognitive process in managing stress. Since appraisal is an important aspect in the counselor stress model advocated in this paper, cognitive restructuring appears to be a potentially beneficial technique. Counselors have a degree of influence over their appraisal of a potentially stressful situation. How they use that influence probably dictates the potency of the stress situation. According to Kremer and Owen (1979), cognitive restructuring involves a five-part process.

The first is to recognize that cognition plays a powerful role in determining the potency of a situation. Examples of such self-statements are, "I can't stand this anymore!" or, "This situation is awful--why am I working here?" These statements serve to turn many harmless situations into disastrous ones.

Monitoring these self-statements helps the counselor to understand how they maintain stressful behaviors. This is the second part of the program.

Third, when inappropriate appraisals are monitored and their effects are understood, more appropriate appraisals can be learned. These include techniques for more accurately appraising situations (e.g., force-field analysis, decision-making techniques).

Relearning self-statements that are more effective in appraising situations constitutes the fourth step. Counselors can be trained to eliminate harmful appraisals and replace them with ones that are more appropriate and realistic.

Finally, through relaxation procedures, counselors can develop coping mechanisms capable of dealing with stressful situations. This encourages personal efficacy which, in turn, encourages fewer negative self-statements.

Organizational Burnout

Organizational burnout is characterized by low employee morale, low rates of productivity, high levels of absenteeism, ineffective and infrequent communication among workers, and frequent job turnover. In organizations experiencing burnout there is little apparent direction--the organization and its workers function with no sense of mission.

The question may be asked: Why do some human service organizations burn out while others with similar functions seem to thrive? The answer may be that certain conditions exist in some organizations which help create a burnout situation.

Conditions Leading to Burnout

Many conditions within human service organizations may lead to burnout. Six of these will be discussed: lack of funds, lack of flexibility, lack of decision-making power of middle managers, task overload, little recognition for efforts, and the nature of the client populations (Moracco & McFadden, 1979).

Lack of funds in human service or nonprofit organizations creates three problems. First, the pay is lower than that for similar work in industry, private practice, or business, which results in job performance that cannot be directly linked with monetary rewards. A second problem is that money is often not available for needed programs. Often materials and resources are inadequate to operate existing programs effectively. Third, the physical working conditions are often substandard--for example, a local mental health center may be located in a rundown house with poor facilities or a depressing atmosphere.

Another problem that leads to burnout in human service agencies is the organization's lack of flexibility. This often results from the need to meet state rules and regulations, which prevent quick changes. For example, if a job description for a government-funded children's residential facility states that the houseparents must be a married couple, then a new job description must be submitted and approved and the contract changed before two single people can be hired. Yet, the law states that it is discriminatory to consider marital status in hiring!

An organization's own bureaucracy can be just as hard to break through. Though it may be more efficient in a mental health organization for counselors to take compensatory time off in one- or two-hour blocks when clients have cancelled out at the last minute, usually compensatory time can only be taken after proper forms have been submitted to the supervisor, approved, and filed in the front office. This inflexibility results in the counselor's being in his/her office at times with no clients, and having to cancel client appointments when compensatory time is taken through traditional procedures. Finally, the trend toward accountability necessitates that documentation take precedence over direct contact with clients.

A third condition that leads to organizational burnout is the lack of decision-making power of middle managers, such as program directors or department chairpersons. Middle managers often shoulder heavy loads of responsibilities, but may lack the necessary authority to manage these responsi-

bilities efficiently. Often someone far removed from the situation, who has little or no direct contact with clients, makes client-related decisions. Such a condition is frustrating to the middle manager and to subordinates, who are left to carry out instructions which may come too late to do anything for the clients. Another problem for the middle manager is that government regulations may make proper care impossible. For instance, a child who needs special education must first have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) on file. By the time the proper testing is done, all the professionals involved agree on the service needed, and the IEP is developed, a large portion of the school year may have passed.

Another factor contributing to burnout is task overload. This leads to inadequate client care in that the counselor, teacher, or police officer is preoccupied with clerical requirements, feeling the need to rush one client through in order to get to the next one. This leaves the professional frustrated, thinking that he/she will never get through, and cannot devote the time to doing anything well.

Human service workers receive little recognition for their efforts. In industry an employee gets raises, promotions, or sales awards. Human service organizations may not have money available for any of these reward systems. Since human service workers are concerned with people, not products, it certainly would not be appropriate to give an award to the counselor who saw the most clients!

Finally, the very nature of the client population leads to burnout. Clients are in need, constantly taking from counselors and staff. Often counseling situations are emotionally charged, which is stressful for the counselor. This constant giving on the part of the counselor, coupled with a lack of reinforcement and support, leads quickly to burnout.

Symptoms of Burned Out Organizations

Low morale is the chief symptom of a burned out organization. This is characterized by frequent staff turnover, reduced effectiveness, and infighting among departments or informal groups. Workers are constantly griping and complaining. The healthy support systems that ought to be present are lacking and power plays are evident among informal cliques, which are formed in an effort to provide a support system.

A burned out organization lacks clearly defined goals. The organization

functions from crisis to crisis, seeming to lack a sense of mission or direction. If goals do exist, the staff may not be aware of them, or may not have internalized them. A staff working under such conditions cannot be expected to exhibit much commitment (Moracco, 1978).

Another related symptom of organizational burnout is stagnation. The organization may be expanding in terms of the number of clients served, but it lacks organizational and staff development. Either the organization isn't providing inservice training, or the inservice is not relevant to the staff's needs. New ideas are not generated; programs and policies remain the same year after year, even though the environment or the clientele may have changed. For example, a high school exists whose curriculum is designed for middle class whites, but for the past two years over half of its students have been bussed in from black neighborhoods.

A fourth symptom is a lack of understanding from leadership toward employees. Workers approach their supervisors with problems and get such macho responses as, "What's the matter, can't you take it?" (Maslach, 1977). This leads to lack of respect for supervisors and administrators. As a consequence, strategies are employed by the staff to hide problems from administrators.

Workers in burned out organizations show physical and emotional disturbances. These are manifested in higher levels of absenteeism, especially on "stress days"--Monday and Friday. People get sick more often, and there is more alcohol and drug abuse (Freudenberger, 1975). Workers may be observed taking tranquilizers to "calm their nerves," or aspirin for tension headaches. They become irritable, preoccupied, and anxious. This creates higher rates of absenteeism, which in turn leads to more task overload to compensate for those who are out sick.

Burned out organizations lack communication networks that healthy organizations exhibit. There is a preoccupation with organizational roles usually related to status or hierarchy within the organization. This promotes communication barriers. "Going through the proper channels" fosters the problem of excessive links. With each link in the organization flow chart, the interpretation of the original message differs a little. "Communication flows more readily from the top of the organization down then it does from the bottom up" (Meadows, 1978, p.2). Administrators can send out memos and call staff meetings if an important message needs to be sent, but a counselor

must go up the hierarchical ladder to get a message to the top. Such rigid communication patterns lead to feelings of alienation and powerlessness among supervisors and supervisees (Meadows, 1978). Workers feel that they have no input into the functioning of the organization, and supervisors believe that their instructions fall on deaf ears and wonder why their employees do not make positive contributions.

Effects of Burnout on Organizations

The effects of organizational burnout on the counseling staff are fairly obvious. The most pronounced is that the delivery of counseling services to needy people is compromised. The overall quality of care given in burned out organizations decreases. This may cause the staff to work more diligently but to little avail. A cycle is started where more and more effort is needed to accomplish tasks that may have been considered routine earlier. Much of the organization's time is caught up in crisis situations with infrequent occasions devoted to planning and carrying out long-term goals.

Staff morale begins a downhill slide which acerbates the situation further. An atmosphere of cynicism permeates the group and begins to take on its own momentum. It becomes increasingly difficult to counteract the callous attitude that is taking hold of members in the organization. Before long rigid thinking and other aspects of authoritarianism become the main interaction style of the staff.

Job turnover is more likely to occur in burned out organizations. The tenure of any one staff member is apt to be shorter than that in more adequately functioning organizations. Rapid turnover puts additional stress on the organization as resources must be allocated to interview, hire, and train new counselors. This drain on the organization makes it less able to cope with the normal stress of counseling. Constant turnover adds to the sense of instability that members feel facing one crisis after another. Burnout takes a heavy toll on individual members. Incidences of mental illness generally increase in high-stress organizations. Physical illnesses are contracted more often and are harder to shake by people experiencing burnout (Freudenberger, 1977). There is subsequent rise in marital difficulties for people working in stressful environments. Finally, and most tragically, the suicide rate increases dramatically for individuals involved with work that is associated with high stress factors.

Preventing Burnout in Organizations

To prevent and combat burnout in organizations a continual process of prevention and self-renewal must be inaugurated (Rubner & Zaffran, 1975). The main vehicle for carrying out this process is the social-professional support group referred to earlier in this paper (Maslach & Pines, 1977). Some of the ways in which the support system can function are listed below.

1. Providing opportunities for organizational self-assessment. The support group, aware of the need to monitor continually the organization's climate for signs of burnout, can institute periodic self-assessment procedures. This assessment should provide answers to such questions as: What procedures or approaches appear to be obsolete when compared with those in recent professional literature? Are there certain activities required by counselors that consume energy disproportionate to their worth? Are there dynamics in the organization that prevent staff members from accomplishing their goals? A series of questions such as these asked every month can give the continuing self-assessment needed to help prevent burnout (Rubner & Zaffran, 1975).

2. Using consensus approach to problem solving. If after self-assessment the support group feels that some activities are hindering the organization's effectiveness, it is obliged to ameliorate the situation. The strategy used to accomplish this could be similar to that identified by Moracco (1979). This strategy uses the consensus approach to problem solving or conflict resolution and allows resolutions to be enacted which are agreeable to the whole group.

3. Giving feedback and rewards to members. The group can provide a structure wherein counselors can discuss client problems professionally and their reactions to these problems in an open and honest manner. Counselors can have an opportunity to discuss how they feel about clients without having to feel inadequate. This function is not to be confused with social chit-chat: The support group should discourage coffee-break conversation in such situations. There are other outlets for this type of social interaction.

4. Providing timeouts for members experiencing burnout. Individual members can seek help from the group when they sense that they are developing signs of burnout. The professional-social group can provide the framework for timeouts in the organization. Sometimes it is necessary for a counselor to take a short vacation or simply stay away from the organization. The support system, recognizing

this need, can take up the responsibilities of the counselor. This time away is not regularly scheduled as are annual vacations; rather, it is based on needs as identified by an individual counselor or by the support system. The individual who takes timeouts must recognize that this is a legitimate action and that there is no cause for feeling guilty.

Related to this is the concept that burnout can help to be prevented if boredom is not allowed to set in. Frequently, aspects of counseling are so routine that counselors run the risk of becoming insensitive to the needs of clients. Counselors can overcome this condition to a certain extent by changing their activities. Some counselors can take on administrative tasks, others can interact with clients who have concerns substantially different from those that are normally part of the counselor's routine case load. If managed creatively, counselors can take on decision-making duties typically associated with administrators. One byproduct of changing functions is that an appreciation is gained for other roles and responsibilities in the organization.

5. Screening potential employees carefully. Because there is a real danger that the unrealistically-committed counselor is headed for burnout, the support system can carefully screen potential counselors for the organization. In addition to assessing whether the candidate can cope adequately with the stress-laden conditions of a counseling environment, the group should be alert to certain indicators that a candidate is prone to unrealistic commitment. One such is the extent to which the potential candidate involves him/herself with counseling to the exclusion of meaningful outside activities.

The one-dimensional individual completely devoted to counseling who expects to receive all of his/her reinforcements from counseling is particularly vulnerable to burnout. A counselor should have an outside life that is both distinct and meaningful because of the intimate nature and involvement of the counseling process (Moracco & McFadden, 1979).

The five functions of the social-professional support system do not constitute the full extent of activities that this group can undertake. Much depends on the organization's setting, goals, structure, and activities--that is, support systems operating in school organizations will probably function somewhat differently from systems in mental health agencies. The important point to be made is that the concept of a professional-support group should be integrated formally into the organizational structure. By being aware that counseling organizations may be particularly vulnerable to

burnout and having a mechanism to deal with this phenomenon, burnout can be avoided, or, if it does occur, it can be faced and its consequences held to a minimum.

Summary

In this monograph a model of stress and burnout has been posited. The model emphasizes the central role of appraisal in the stress paradigm. Intervention strategies are possible at certain points in the model. The most effective places rest with the individual (e.g., learning new coping mechanisms, cognitive restructuring) and the environment (e.g., developing a social-professional support group).

A syndrome of behaviors accompanies the burned out counselor. It includes a callous attitude toward people, escapism of various sorts, and reduced counselor effectiveness. Ramifications are also felt in the counselor's personal life: Deterioration in the quality of family life and personal health are just two examples.

Stress-reducing strategies have been highlighted. Noteworthy is the cognitive restructuring approach in the appraisal process, a strategy which has great potential for preventing or assuaging counselor stress.

Organizations also burn out. Six conditions have been presented which are thought to contribute to the burnout process. Prevention approaches have been described to help thwart organizational burnout and to facilitate the renewal process.

Burnout exacts a heavy toll on individuals and organizations. In times of limited resources it is imperative that waste and inefficiency be held to a minimum. Prevention measures for burnout can be helpful in ensuring that counselors and organizations are productive.

Descriptive research needs to be conducted to provide information on what are specific stressors in a counselor's life, what are effective stress-reducing activities, and what behaviors represent healthy and burned out organizations. Answers to these questions will provide useful information for practicing counselors.

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